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## THE FLEMISH MOVEMENT AND FLEMISH NATIONALISM

### INSTRUMENTS, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND DEBATES

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The historiography of the Flemish movement and the Belgian nationality conflict is very extensive and diverse. The seven-part *Bibliografie van de Vlaamse beweging* (Bibliography of the Flemish movement) on the years 1945 to 2001 contains almost 20,000 titles.<sup>1</sup> Although by far not all titles are scientific and historiographical, it says something about the extent of the production. It is obviously impossible to strive for completeness in the few words of this article. I will limit myself to the main working instruments with which I also address the scientific infrastructure. Furthermore I provide an overview of the basic works and the most significant literature in English, French and German. Finally I give a concise overview of the smouldering historiographical debates.

### Instruments

Jo Tollebeek, one of the most important *connoisseurs* of the Belgian historiographical production, concludes that from the 1970s on quantitative as well as qualitative research increased greatly as the result of a process of professionalisation and the development of an infrastructure specifically focused on the study of the history of the Flemish movement.<sup>2</sup>



Bruno De Wever, 'The Flemish movement and Flemish nationalism. Instruments, historiography and debates', in: *Studies on National Movements*, 1 (2013) pp. 50-80.

<http://snm.nise.eu>

The input of the Flemish universities was very important in this regard. Broadly speaking, from the 1960s on and culminating in the years 1970-1980, hundreds of dissertations and dozens of doctoral theses on the Flemish movement were written in the history departments of Belgian universities.<sup>3</sup>

The above-mentioned *Bibliografie van de Vlaamse beweging* offers a voluminous but rather unselective overview of the literature. The first three parts feature an overview of the books, folders and periodical articles from and about the Flemish movement after 1945 and published in the period concerned. From part four contributions were also included concerning the period before 1945. An eighth part was no longer published, but the bibliography was continued digitally on the website of the Archief-, Documentatie- en Onderzoekscentrum voor het Vlaams-Nationalisme (ADV N, Archival, Documentation and Research Centre for Flemish Nationalism).<sup>4</sup> For the production from 2001 on in printed form the exhaustive ongoing 'Bibliographie de l'histoire de Belgique' that is published in the *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* has to be consulted. It contains a section 'La situation des langues; les organisations et les mouvements flamand et wallon; la régionalisation' (The situation of the languages; the organisations and the Flemish and Walloon movements; regionalisation).

Selective and well-reasoned overviews of the academic literature about the Flemish movement are signposts in the jungle of information. The most recent overview by Harry Van Velthoven is at the same time the most complete.<sup>5</sup> It absorbs a number of previously published contributions.<sup>6</sup> In languages other than Dutch, so far there was a publication of mine in German and some overviews in French, which will be discussed later in this article.<sup>7</sup>

In the field of scientific infrastructure the publication of the *Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse beweging* (Encyclopaedia of the Flemish movement) in the early 1970s and the *Nieuwe encyclopedie van de Vlaamse beweging* (New encyclopaedia of the Flemish movement) (below abbreviated to *NEVB*) at the end of the twentieth century may be pointed out.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore there is the *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen* (*Wt*) periodical. Originally this was a

periodical to promote Dutchification of science in Flanders, but from 1981 on it has been exclusively devoted to the history of the Flemish movement and developed into a platform for the academic study of the Flemish movement.<sup>9</sup> Apart from articles it contains reviews and descriptions of literature in the field. It also pays attention to the theory development on nationalism and to the comparison of the Flemish movement with other national movements.<sup>10</sup>



*The Nieuwe encyclopedie van de Vlaamse beweging (1998), with its 3799 pages of prime importance for all historians of the Flemish movement. | ADVN, ANTWERP*

Research was stimulated by the establishment of a number of archive and documentation centres with special attention for research on the Flemish movement and preservation of its heritage. The Archief en Museum voor het Vlaams Cultuurleven (AMVC, Archive and Museum for Flemish Cultural Life) was already founded before World War II and concentrated for a long time on collecting the documentary heritage of the broad Flemish movement. But in 2002 the AMVC was converted to a *Letterenhuis* (House of Literature) aimed at preserving and opening up literary texts, a development that directs the institute away from the history of the Flemish movement outside of the literary field. This evolution was

connected with the development from the 1980s on of archives that had the traditional socio-political groupings of Belgian society as their field of work and which also collected archives on the catholic, socialist and liberal Flemish movement.<sup>11</sup> Of these four private-law cultural archives recognised by the Flemish government, the Archief-, Documentatie- en Onderzoekscentrum voor het Vlaams-nationalisme (ADV N) emphatically positions itself as a knowledge centre for the Flemish movement in a broader sense than just its nationalist wing.<sup>12</sup> Since the end of 1993 it became the home of the aforementioned periodical *Wt*. The ADV N publishes and exhibits on the Flemish movement and constitutes a collection in which, in addition to the Flemish-nationalist heritage, there is also space for archives of Flemish-minded initiatives not bound to socio-political groupings. In 2008 the ADV N founded the National movements & Intermediary Structures in Europe (NISE) platform. This promoted the comparative approach of nationalist movements, a trend that also came to the fore in *Wt* (see above).

## **Historiography: from involved commitment to critical distance**

In the early 1980s, in an analysis of the historiography of the Flemish movement, Eliane Gubin arrived at the conclusion that there was a symbiosis between the Flemish movement and its historiography. The majority of the authors were committed or at least involved, so that as a matter of course their analyses started from a Flemish-minded view.<sup>13</sup> To a large extent the production and consumption of the historiography of the Flemish movement occurred outside of the walls of academia. It was expressed in a large number of commemorative volumes and first-person writings on the one hand, and on the other in a militant historiography with often great impact on the popular perception. Until the 1970s there was a strong bond between the historiography and a political or cultural commitment in or on the edge of the Flemish movement. The most eloquent example is undoubtedly Hendrik Elias (1902-1973), the author of much-read syntheses about the history of the Flemish movement<sup>14</sup>, the

adviser of above-mentioned *Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse beweging* and sentenced to death because of his collaboration in World War II as the leader of the Vlaams Nationaal Verbond (Flemish National Union), the major collaborating party in Flanders.<sup>15</sup> There are numerous other examples of highly committed historians who wrote academically respected works on the Flemish movement. The fifteen-part *Twintig eeuwen Vlaanderen* (Twenty centuries of Flanders) was published in the 1970s and may be considered as the culmination of this committed historiography.<sup>16</sup> In many thousands of pages the Flemish nation was consecrated and, as the title already indicates, endowed with an age-old history.

The professionalisation of the historiography of the Flemish movement meshes with a rift between commitment and historiography. The above-mentioned *NEVB* symbolises this, as it was more critical than its precedent. This does not mean that the politico-ideological concerns disappeared completely or that the historiography therefore suddenly opened doors and windows. Although it was not always the more convinced Flemish-minded who occupied themselves with the subject, they were virtually always Flemish. For a long time Gubin was the only French-speaking Belgian historian who defended a doctoral thesis on the Flemish movement.<sup>17</sup> Her promoter was Jean Stengers (1922-2002) who, in his extensive and varied oeuvre, personally also paid attention to the national question in Belgium in general and the Flemish movement in particular. In 1948 the historian at the French-speaking Université Libre de Bruxelles obtained his doctorate with an investigation into the historical roots of Belgian nationality. The thesis was the basis for his very last book. The first part was published just before his death; Gubin posthumously completed the second part.<sup>18</sup> Lode Wils (°1929) is an emeritus professor of history at the Dutch-speaking Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, and himself the author of some of the most important syntheses about the history of the Flemish movement and nation building in Belgium.<sup>19</sup> He did not understand that what he considered deplorable situations as a result of the lack of understanding and/or unwillingness of the French-speaking powers-that-be were evaluated by Stengers as litanies of the *petite bourgeoisie* who, because of their faulty knowledge of

French, were thwarted in their professional career opportunities.<sup>20</sup> Two celebrities of the Belgian contemporary history flesh out the history of the Flemish movement in a completely different way.

For the time being, the obviously unbridgeable inter-Belgian interpretation rift is not bridged by outsiders. Abroad there is little interest in the Belgian national question.<sup>21</sup> International colloquia at which the Belgian language and nation conflict is a substantial subject – so more than a single account – can be counted on the fingers of one hand. In 1994 an international colloquium was organised at the KU Leuven about nations and languages and the development of Europe, which resulted in 1998 in an English-language book on the nationality question in Belgium.<sup>22</sup> However, the authors all have Belgian nationality and live or work in Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels. It is one of the few academic overviews which inform an international public about the history of the Belgian nationality question.<sup>23</sup> In addition, there was also the publication of *Languages in contact and in conflict. The Belgian case* by the Brussels historians Els Witte and Van Velthoven, who analysed the Belgian language question historically and sociologically.<sup>24</sup> The Antwerp historian Herman Van Goethem analysed the Belgian nationality question in relation to the monarchy in *Belgium and the monarchy. From national independence to national disintegration*.<sup>25</sup>

In recent years there has been increasing scholarly interest in Germany.<sup>26</sup> In fact it is renewed interest, since even before World War II the early history of the Low Countries and in particular the development of the linguistic frontier was given special attention in the German *Westforschung* that however had a geopolitical rather than a scholarly purpose.<sup>27</sup>

## Theoretical models

The historiography of the Flemish movement was influenced by the enormously increased international interest in the generation of theories about nationalism and nation building. In her analysis of political history

in Belgium, Witte concludes that historians rather systematically think theoretically about the phenomenon of the nation state and nationalism.<sup>28</sup> In various publications, diverse types of nation building and related identification processes in Belgium are analysed from the viewpoint of explicitly clarified theories.<sup>29</sup> However, critics point out that in some publications the theories are employed in a rather inconsistent way and with a lack of analytical rigour.<sup>30</sup> This is a well-known criticism of historians who practise the art of eclecticism in a generally undisciplined way, as appears from Witte's analysis.

Nevertheless, some key ideas can be detected. For example, constructivist theory formation is a great success. Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and some lesser gods are omnipresent in the notes of historiographers on the Flemish movement.<sup>31</sup> According to these authors, nation building was an ideological construction of interested elites which was popularised by means of the state's instruments of power (education, conscription, state rituals) and other channels (religion, media) in order to bring about a national identification of the masses with the state. It involves a continuous process, so that nation building is in constant flux. In Flanders this theoretical paradigm was popularised by, *inter alia*, the work of the historian and journalist Marc Reynebeau with the revealing title *De natie bestaat niet* (The nation does not exist).<sup>32</sup> The Leuven historian Louis Vos warned that deconstruction of nationalism to a purely ideological construction, a socio-psychological category or a narrative discourse, threw out the baby with the bath water since nation building was insufficiently analysed as a social reality.<sup>33</sup> The same criticism is found with Van Velthoven who, from a language-sociologically oriented point of view has attention for language identification as part of power processes involving the interest of broad layers of the population. His article in *NEVB* about 'De naties in Belgium anno 2000. Concepten en perspectieven' (The nations in Belgium in 2000. Concepts and perspectives) and the important book he wrote together with Witte about *Languages in contact and in conflict* show that a bottom-up approach is required and that a top-down approach should not be narrowed down to an exposure of myths.

National myths are not construed from scratch either. The British sociologist Anthony Smith made it plausible in various influential works that modern nations are mutations of older nations or ethnic groups.<sup>34</sup> Because of an entire string of factors (including the common history, wars, shared lineage myths, and culture) within a well-defined territory, population groups develop an ethnical bond that continues to have an effect on modern nations. It is a vision that highly influenced Wils when writing his much-read and influential synthesis *Van Clovis tot Di Rupo. De lange weg van de naties in de Lage Landen* (From Clovis to Di Rupo. The long way of the nations in the Low Countries).<sup>35</sup> But by far the greatest influence on Wils came from Czech historian Miroslav Hroch. He developed a theory on nation building based on an empirical investigation into so-called 'small nations' in the nineteenth century, including the Flemish. He published it as early as 1968, but it took until the end of the 1980s before his insights penetrated, partly due to Hobsbawm, who called them groundbreaking.<sup>36</sup> When in the early 1990s they were picked up by Belgium's most fruitful author on the Flemish movement, a powerful



*Professor Lode Wils visiting  
the ADVN on 9 May 1998*

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*Professor Miroslav Hroch in  
Vienna on 27 May 2011*

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explanation model was born. Wils, who in his previous writings never showed any interest in theory formation, integrated them in his notions on the history of the Flemish movement.

Hroch studied small European nations in the nineteenth century and concluded that in states in which small nations are structurally subordinate to a leading nation, the social and national transformation was complicated by the fact that the national movement of the small nation not only turned against the Ancien Régime, but also against the new leading class. On the basis of this comparative approach he distinguished three stages in the national transformation process, which relate temporally to three stages in the social transformation. Various types of national movements develop depending on this relationship. According to Hroch the Flemish national movement was of the disintegrated type, since it only arose after the industrial and civil revolutions. The fact that the labour movement had already developed in the national Belgian context before the Flemish movement reached the second stage had a disintegrating effect. The language barrier cut right through the social barrier. Because of the regime of political freedom the conflicts of interest could be fought out in the political arena and therefore these conflicts did not have to be expressed as cultural or language conflicts. According to Hroch, the Flemish movement therefore developed too late to be able to graft on to the labour movement, and therefore the Flemish nation-building process could not be completed. Wils argued that the Flemish movement consolidated when after World War I, by means of the Christian democracy, the Flemish-minded intelligentsia appeared to be capable of expressing the interest of specific social groups of the small nation in national terms.<sup>37</sup> It is an interesting hypothesis which remains unproven so far since the identification process of Christian democracy with the Flemish nation still has to be investigated. Patrick Pasture already pointed out that the Christian labour movement continued to identify with Belgium for a long time after World War II.<sup>38</sup>

The fact that, besides language rights, the Flemish movement also had a socio-economic agenda, which in addition gave rise to Flemish nation building, received relatively little academic interest in spite of good reception of Hroch's theory. Dirk Luyten and Olivier Boehme offer a good introduction into the issue and the sparse literature.<sup>39</sup>

## Debates

### *The social players of the Flemish movement in the nineteenth century*

The question of who were the driving forces of the Flemish movement before World War I has been occupying historiographers of the Flemish movement for many decades. Especially the position and impact of the clerical and anti-clerical forces for and against the Flemish emancipation occasioned academic fireworks. At first sight it is about which political family had the greatest merit in Flemish emancipation. On reflection it is about the definition of the concept of Flemish emancipation and the course of (Flemish) nation building.

The fact that the Flemish movement was originally part of a Belgian-national aspiration and that the Belgian state tolerated the vernacular in Flanders as a commonplace language and a cultural artefact of a glorious past, meets virtually general acceptance nowadays. Projecting a Flemish-Belgian antithesis from 1830 on was part of a Flemish-nationalist interpretation of history, of which the above-mentioned Elias was virtually the most important and most talented representative. Wils in particular disproved this proposition in his oeuvre. However, recent studies again indicate anti-Belgian sentiments in the nineteenth-century Flemish movement. The German historian Gevert Nörtemann for example points out that the Flemish movement from an ethno-nationalist feeling developed an aversion to a Belgium that embraced French culture.<sup>40</sup>

But the question remains whether the largely illiterate and rural population in the Flemish provinces were on the whole inspired by any nation building whatsoever. Throughout the nineteenth century the people went onto the streets in protest, but virtually never for a nationalist issue.<sup>41</sup> Maarten Van Ginderachter pointed out that there was very little research from below into nation building in Belgium.<sup>42</sup> Personally from that perspective he wrote an interesting work in which he demonstrated that Flemish socialist workers did subscribe to Flemish nation building and that this should be viewed separately from the political standpoints the party assumed *vis-à-vis* the Flemish movement.<sup>43</sup> In the historiography

there is great unanimity on the fact that the Belgische Werklieden Partij (Belgian Workers Party) made the fight for the material improvement of life a priority over Flemish-minded demands. There is a dispute about the appreciation of the indirect importance of the BWP for the Flemish movement, because the party enforced the general voting right together with the progressive liberals and thus enlarged the specific weight of the Dutch-speaking voter in politics, a point of view that is defended by, among others, Witte and Van Velthoven.<sup>44</sup> Wils attaches little importance to this and rather points out the importance of the (lower) clergy, the catholic Flemish student movement and the Christian democracy for the rapid expansion of Flemish-mindedness.

The historiographical discussion becomes far more razor-edged when the input from the clerical and anti-clerical forces is appreciated.<sup>45</sup> Wils gathered a following with the proposition that the Flemish movement could not be viewed separately from social and ideological development. Before the nineteenth century, Belgian nation building and the dominant contrast between clericals and anti-clericals determined the development of the Flemish movement. Because this contrast ripped apart the Belgian elites, it greatly impacted the sub-elites who made efforts for the rights of the vernacular. There is a consensus that the rift between the catholic and liberal Flemish-minded became unbridgeable, so that in fact two Flemish movements developed. It is also generally accepted that this situation had a weakening and mobilising effect at the same time. Depending on the political context the ideological fight resulted in advantages and disadvantages. The dispute deals with the influence of the extra-parliamentary Flemish movements on the one hand and the attitude of the catholic and liberal members of parliament in the realisation of the first language laws of the 1870s and 1880s on the other.

For Wils it is indisputable that the catholic cultural organisation Davidsfonds was far more radically Flemish-minded than its liberal counterpart and that this was a reflection of a fundamentally differing attitude of the clerical and anti-clerical rank-and-file. In a study on the liberal cultural organisation Willemsfonds, Van Velthoven states that it was the most important Flemish-minded organisation in the nineteenth century and trendsetting in virtually all cultural fields.<sup>46</sup> The latter is not

denied by Wils, who considered the 'fundamental backwardness' of Flemish catholicism on a cultural level to be the cause. Conversely, Van Velthoven does not conceal that from 1884 the Willemsfonds became sclerotic and descended into political immobility. So the interpretations are not that far apart.

But the interpretation rift remains unbridgeable as regards the analysis of the parliamentary Flemish movement. For Wils it is absolutely clear that there is a connection between the political power of the catholic Party and the legal realisations on a Flemish level. The anti-clerical side put on the brakes and determined the limit to which the catholics could go with their language legislation. Therefore the introduction of proportional allocation of seats in 1900 and the resulting increased presence of elected Flemish liberal and socialist members entailed stagnation of the language legislation. *Inter alia* Van Velthoven and Witte contest this by pointing out that the blockages should be sought mainly within the catholic camp as such.<sup>47</sup> Other authors agree with them on this point.<sup>48</sup> But the consensus seems to increase on the fact that Dutchification was not a political priority for any of the three political families. The investigation by Van Ginderachter of the first language law in criminal cases of 1873 showed how difficult it is to make statements on the basis of voting behaviour on the Flemish-minded 'content' of this or that political family.<sup>49</sup> However, it seems to be certain that there were more Flemish-minded people in the catholic Party, who also defended their case more radically. The catholic Party did have its power base in Flanders, while the anti-clerical Flemish-minded acted from a double minority position. As anti-clericals they were a minority in Flanders, which had remained very religious, and as Flemish-minded in the Liberal Party and the socialist Belgian Workers Party, which had their power base in Brussels and Wallonia.

It is also certain that throughout the nineteenth century the Flemish movement evolved from a language movement to a sub-national movement.<sup>50</sup> The democratisation of voting rights and the rise of a Walloon movement, which demanded the 'administrative separation' of Belgium, played a part here.<sup>51</sup> However, the turn towards an anti-Flemish nationalism only came about during and because of World War I; most historians also agree on this nowadays.

### *The impact of World War I on Flemish nation building*

The collaboration with the German occupier of the radical Flemish movement during World War I has already been feeding polemics for a century, in the scientific historiography as well. Today they have not completely abated yet, although the acuteness is somewhat blunted. Again it was Wils with his book *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme* (German pro-Flemish politics and Flemish collaboration) who intensified and deepened the historiographical dispute.<sup>52</sup> The Leuven professor argued that the *activism*, as the collaboration was called in Belgium during World War I, was implanted by the occupier's *Flamenpolitik*, who thus wanted to destroy the Belgian state, annex Flanders and obtain goodwill in circles of Dutch people who dreamt of annexation of Flanders to the Netherlands. The occupier did not succeed in his design because the large majority of the Flemish movement remained loyal to Belgium. Only a very minimal fraction allowed itself to be convinced, mainly through personal gain. In the long term *Flamenpolitik* did have an effect on national Belgian politics, since activism and its judicial aftermath saw the birth of an irreconcilable anti-Belgian Flemish nationalism. The worm infested the unitarian Belgian state. With this analysis Wils contradicted the Dutch historian and *connoisseur* of Flemish nationalism Arie Wolter Willemssen (1931-2003) and the aforementioned Elias.<sup>53</sup> For these authors the worm had already infested the fruit before 1914 as a result of the Flemish-minded frustration that formed the fertile soil in which activism could take root as a small, but qualitatively important fraction that opted for collaboration with the occupier above loyalty to the Belgian state. The demythologisation of *idealist* activism brought down much criticism on Wils and other researchers. It affected the self-image of generations of Flemish nationalists, for whom the cult of idealism was compensation for broken careers, criminal prosecution or political powerlessness resulting from criminal prosecution after collaboration during the two world wars. Even more important than an analysis of the activists' personal reasons was the judgement of their political choices. Some activists did not hesitate to realise their objectives *manu militari*. In this way they sowed the seed for an anti-democratic Flemish nationalism.<sup>54</sup>

The historiography about the so-called *Frontbeweging* (Front movement), the Flemish-nationalist radicalisation of the Flemish soldiers at the front, led to far less controversy, but it took more than eighty years before a scientifically founded synthesis was published.<sup>55</sup> This shows that neither the Front movement nor the Belgian military leadership pushed the issues, even though the leaders of the Front movement had to repudiate some soldiers who on its orders went across the lines in 1918 to make contact with activist leaders. With this order the leaders of the Front movement entered into revolutionary logics. But when desertions broke out and it became really dangerous, they rejected the responsibilities for politically inspired desertions. The limited followers of the Front movement, which had only a few thousand members, made a revolutionary strategy illusory. The importance of the Front movement and the Flemish-minded contestation at the front is mainly found in the ritualisation and mythologisation after the war. The adventures of a group of protesting Flemish-minded front soldiers slogging along in the mud of the Yser plain took on an existential meaning: idealist Flanders took up the fight against Belgium that had dishonoured the Flemish sacrifice for the interest of the French-speakers.

The historiography agrees about the major importance of both the activism and the Front movement for the history of Belgium. They caused a breach in the Flemish movement and laid the foundations for an anti-Belgian movement. There is, however, disagreement about the causes and consequences of certain matters. We already saw how Wils assigned decisive impact to foreign influences. In addition he pointed to the Belgian king Albert I (1875-1934), who with his explicitly hostile attitude to the Flemish personally put a bomb under the unitarian state. The king kept Frans Van Cauwelaert (1880-1961), the leader of the loyal catholic Flemish-minded people, out of the government and did not want to make any concessions to the Flemish movement from fear of offending his officer corps and other socio-political groupings of the state. With his charm offensive he misled the Flemish-minded public opinion, while he gave the anti-clerical Walloon movement what it wanted. That was the reason why the university in Ghent was not allowed to be Dutchified after 1918, in spite of promises made. The title of the third part of Wils'

biography by Van Cauwelaert leaves nothing to the imagination: *Frans Van Cauwelaert afgewezen door Koning Albert I. Een tijdbom onder België* (Frans Van Cauwelaert rejected by King Albert I. A time bomb under Belgium). Critics argued that Wils had little attention for a constitutional monarch's limited freedom of action. His role consists of moderating polarising forces. Since the Flemish movement was compromised by the collaboration of the activists and because the Catholic Party did not make a priority of the Flemish-minded demands, while the opposite forces were determined, Albert I had few reasons for putting Van Cauwelaert's Flemish programme high on the agenda.<sup>56</sup> Van Goethem also develops this argumentation in his book on *Belgium and the monarchy*. There he also maintains that not World War I but the introduction of the General Multiple Voting Right (1893) was the crucial turning point in the Belgian nationality conflict because 'the masses gradually came to realise that the language barrier was also an economic barrier, and so they became convinced that all French influences had to be removed from their region.'<sup>57</sup> That was the fertile soil on which anti-Belgian Flemish nationalism could grow. Whether this would have come about without a German *Flamenpolitik* remains an open question.

### *The Flemish movement during the interwar years and World War II*

In the historiography there is a consensus about the fact that absence of a reform of the Belgian state with equal rights for the Dutch-speaking Flemish gave room to radicalisation of the Flemish movement. After World War I, in which the majority of the soldiers in the Belgian army were Flemish, the Flemish population no longer accepted this. The overall legal and factual Dutchification of Flanders was put on the political agenda by the aforementioned Van Cauwelaert. Nowadays it is no longer disputed in the historical debate that the realisation of this programme was to his credit in the first place. There is no fundamental disagreement about the role of the other political families. The Liberal Party opted for the French-speaking minority in Flanders. There is more dispute about the attitude of the socialist Belgian Workers Party. Wils showed that the standpoint of the socialist party evolved into an explicit Walloon-minded and anti-Flemish-

minded point of view.<sup>58</sup> Other authors pointed to the fact that a determined Flemish-minded wing operated behind the scenes of the official party standpoints. At the party congress of November 1929, the latter was the first Belgian party to gain acceptance of the principle of the language homogeneity of both parts of the country.<sup>59</sup>

Most ink was used for the role of Flemish nationalism. The Frontpartij (Front Party), with an explicitly anti-Belgian programme, developed from the activism and the Front movement. The realisation of legal and factual equal rights of the Dutch-speakers within Belgium was no longer the objective. The minimum aim was self-governance and in the political propaganda of the Flemish nationalists any constructive politics in the Belgian institutes was soon considered as betrayal to the Flemish cause. When legal Dutchification was finally realised with a second series of language laws in 1930s, the radicals did not celebrate it as a victory, but as a semi-defeat, while their propaganda claimed that without the crack of the whip of Flemish nationalism nothing at all would have been achieved. In the historiography this propaganda *coup* still resounded. Thus the history of the *Borms election* in 1928 is interpreted completely differently by Elias and Willemsen on the one hand and Wils on the other.<sup>60</sup> Whereas for the former it was a surprising crack of the whip that broke resistance to the language laws, Wils considered it to be a predictable consequence in which the Antwerp socialists and catholics played an important part.<sup>61</sup> Elias and Willemsen rather point to the flaws in the legislation and the willingness for compromise of the (catholic) Flemish-minded, while Wils defends the tactical realisation policy of Van Cauwelaert. From a historical point of view it is an insolvable dispute, since it cannot be known whether a radical obstruction policy of the Flemish-minded against any solution that did not comprise full equality of the Flemish and Walloons would have resulted in a more rapid solution. In any case, at present there is a general consensus about the extraordinarily great importance of the language laws from the interwar years.

The evolution of Flemish nationalism from a concrete Flemish-minded realisation policy to a destructive anti-Belgicism had significant ideological consequences. Flemish nationalism became receptive for the body of thought of an anti-democratic New Order. There is very extensive



literature on the subject, with many disputed points. The consensus has been growing in the last few years.

A particularly fierce dispute was provoked by Vos and – again – Wils. In line with what Wils wrote about the Greater-Netherlands involvement in the *Flamenpolitik*, the scholars from Leuven argued that Pieter Geyl and other celebrities who sympathise with the Greater-Netherlands cause bore great responsibility for the slide of Flemish nationalism towards a fascist direction. It led to a cascade of articles, in which Geyl's followers pointed out that the argumentation of Wils and Vos was based on an unprovable process of intent. With his support for moderate federalist-minded Flemish nationalism, Geyl was thought to have actually stimulated radical anti-Belgicism.<sup>62</sup> It is a proposition that is not confirmed in the sources. However, it is correct that Flemish-nationalist politicians turned the Greater-Netherlands *sine qua non* into a crowbar to render impossible any pragmatic policy in a Belgian and/or reformist-democratic context.<sup>63</sup> The responsibilities for the development of Flemish nationalism should rather be sought in the internal ideological and organisational evolution. Its importance was mainly demonstrated by Vos and the present author.<sup>64</sup> This provoked many comments and reflections in the historiography and public debate, but a fundamental refutation did not come about. In the last decades this issue has come a long way.

Through concealment and cover-up, in the first *Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging* (1973-1975) the dovetailing of anti-Belgian Flemish nationalism with right-wing social criticism in the interwar years and the collaboration of the radical Flemish movement with the national-socialist occupier was still integrated in the Flemish *emancipation* struggle. In *NEVB* it is analysed as *paternalism* of the worst kind since democratic freedoms and elementary human rights were violated for the realisation of a nationalist programme. In the reception and criticisms of *NEVB* the uncomplexed treatment of these 'black pages' in the history of the Flemish movement was considered as proof of a scientific approach and *maturity*. The last metaphor occurs strikingly frequently in the discussions and implicitly makes the link with ongoing Flemish nation building. The rationale is that a mature nation can face its puberty crises. *Aberrational* developments are not condoned (any longer). Only extreme right-wing

Flemish nationalism, among whom the Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest) party still makes an issue out of it.



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The question of the continued existence of extreme right-wing tendencies in the Flemish movement after 1945 is a sensitive issue in the context of the development of the West-European community. Especially Vos pointed out the continuities.<sup>65</sup> The observation that the extreme right-wing train of thought continued to exist after World War II, first in the catacombs and afterwards in and on the edge of new Flemish-nationalist parties, is generally accepted. In 1978 a new extreme right-wing Flemish-nationalist

party emerged in the shape of the Vlaams Blok (Flemish Block), which was mainly studied in the context of the European revival of extreme right-wing movements.<sup>66</sup> The interpretations differ when extreme right-wing Flemish nationalism is linked with the Flemish movement and the Flemish state formation and nation building. According to some, a too easy evacuation of the aberrational past from Flemish state formation and nation building put a democratic burden on society in Flanders. Others are of the opinion that extreme right-wing social notions and Flemish nationalism as such are not related at all, and they regret that researchers confound the two.<sup>67</sup>

In the first decades after the war the Flemish movement focused on further deepening and refinement of the pre-war language laws. Language legislation relating to the capital, Brussels, and establishment of the language border were the major realisations. From the 1960s the reform of the Belgian state appeared on the political agenda. On the Flemish side it was put on the political agenda by the Volksunie (VU, People's Union), a Flemish-nationalist party that developed in the mid-1950s with the regionalisation of Belgium as the main programme issue. Up until now there is no standard work on the VU. For the time being the interested reader will have to be satisfied with detailed studies by mainly political scientists. As for all other Belgian political parties after World War II, the publications of the *Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques* (CRISP, Centre for research and socio-political information) offer a good starting base.<sup>68</sup>

The Belgian state reforms gave birth to an endless mound of scientific literature from a historical, politicological, sociological and legal standpoint.<sup>69</sup> Abroad there was mainly interest in the peaceful co-existence of the Belgian language groups/nations. In 1980, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Belgium, a symposium was held in the Institute of International Studies of the University of California on the conflicts and pacification strategies in a culturally divided country.<sup>70</sup> There was sociological and politicological interest in the Belgian society model at a time when, with a number of state reforms, the Belgian state seemed to adapt to the centrifugal forces within its frontiers. The Belgian federal model was also given international attention.<sup>71</sup> In 2008 the *Re-Bel*

*initiative* was generated, an internationally oriented discussion platform to rethink in depth, in an open, rigorous, non-partisan way, what the institutions of the Belgian federal state can look like in the longer term, taking full account of the evolving European context.<sup>72</sup> Among other things, with English-language e-books and symposia all possible aspects of the Belgian state reform are studied in a multidisciplinary way. It is striking that the possibility of the disappearance of the Belgian state is no longer a taboo.

Attention was paid to Brussels too as a multilingual and multicultural laboratory, because of the efforts of the Brussels Informatie-, Documentatie- en Onderzoekscentrum (BRIO, Brussels Information, Documentation and Research Centre) as well.<sup>73</sup> Its predecessor, the Centrum voor de Interdisciplinaire Studie van Brussel (Centre for the Interdisciplinary Study of Brussels) performed a comparative investigation on *Brussels-Jerusalem. Conflict management and conflict resolution in divided cities*.<sup>74</sup> Brussels also received international scientific interest by way of the Centre d'Etudes Canadiennes of the ULBruxelles (Brussels Free University), which more in general also compares the Belgian language and community problems with the Canadian situation.<sup>75</sup>

But with the electoral success of the anti-Belgian Flemish-nationalist Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA, New Flemish Alliance), which in the federal elections of 2010 became the largest party in Belgium, and the subsequent government crisis that dragged on for 541 days, the outlook changed and Belgium was increasingly considered to be a failed nation state. Belgian historians too perceived an increasingly unbridgeable rift between the communities and searched the past for explanations of this phenomenon.<sup>76</sup>

The N-VA developed from the VU in 2001. The latter party realised its programme when the fourth Belgian state reform (1991-1992) officially reformed Belgium into a federal state. A large part of the rank-and-file of the VU switched to other Flemish parties and created a distinct Flemish profile. The N-VA made the Flemish independent state its political aim, and thus it was no longer only propagated by the extreme right-wing Vlaams Belang. In this way the party brought Vlaams Belang into an electoral free

fall, but it also attracted voters from other parties. The result was a political landslide. Whether the appeal of the N-VA is connected with Flemish separatism or with the conservative ideology, which is mainly proclaimed by the popular party chairman Bart De Wever, leads to political but also scientific debate.<sup>77</sup> It is interesting that the politician – who studied history and is preparing a thesis on the VU – personally states that he takes Hroch's theory as the basis for his political strategy. He wants to achieve Flemish nation building by presenting Flemish independence as in the socio-economic and democratic interest of the Flemish citizen.<sup>78</sup>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> G. Provoost, *Vijfentwintig jaar Vlaamse beweging. Bibliografie 1945-1970* (Ghent, 1971); W. Van den Steene, *De Vlaamse beweging na 1945. Bibliografie 1971-1975* (Ghent, 1977); W. Van den Steene, *De Vlaamse Beweging na 1945. Bibliografie 1976-1980* (Brussels, 1983); W. Van den Steene, *De Vlaamse beweging na 1945. Bibliografie 1981-1985* (Ghent - Antwerp, 1989); P.J. Verstraete & W. Van den Steene, *Bibliografie van de Vlaamse beweging*, 5: 1986-1990 (Antwerp, 1998); P.J. Verstraete, *Bibliografie van de Vlaamse beweging*, 6/7: 1991-2000 (Antwerp, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> J. Tollebeek, 'Historiografie', in: R. De Schryver, B. De Wever, G. Durnez e.a. (eds.), *Nieuwe encyclopedie van de Vlaamse beweging* (Tielt, 1998) 145.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the Belgian dissertations and doctoral theses on contemporary history, see L. François, *Les multiples visages de l'histoire contemporaine* (Ghent, 2003). The author included a section entitled 'Flemish and Walloon movements and Flemish national parties. For the period 2003 to the present, see <http://bvngabhc.wordpress.com/> [accessed 16/4/2013].

<sup>4</sup> See [www.advn.be](http://www.advn.be) [accessed 16/4/2013].

<sup>5</sup> H. Van Velthoven, 'De historiografie over de Vlaamse beweging: ideeëngeschiedenis, machtsstrijd, natievorming', in: H. Van Velthoven, *Waarheen met België? Van taalstrijd tot communautaire conflicten* (Brussels, 2011) 35–70.

<sup>6</sup> G. De Smet (ed.), *De historiografie van de Vlaamse beweging sinds 1975. Handelingen van het colloquium op 24.10.1992 n.a.v. de 50ste jaargang van Wetenschappelijke tijdingen en de 10de jaargang nieuwe stijl* (Ghent, 1993); Tollebeek, 'Historiografie', 117-171; L. Wils, 'De stand van het onderzoek naar de Vlaamse beweging', in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 79/4 (2001) 1283-1299; B. De Wever, 'De historiografie over de Vlaamse beweging', in: *Geschiedenis maken. Liber Amicorum Herman Balthazar* (Ghent, 2003) 129-145; M. Beyen, 'Een uitdijend verhaal. De historiografie van de Vlaamse beweging, 1995-2005', in: *National movements and historiography. Proceedings of the symposium on the historiography of the Flemish movement and of other national movements in Europe* (Antwerp, 2005) 18-34 (= special issue of *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen*, 64 (2005)).

<sup>7</sup> B. De Wever, 'Die Flämische Bewegung. Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung', in: J. Koll (ed.), *Nationale Bewegungen in Belgien. Ein historischer Ueberblick* (Münster - New York - Munich - Berlin, 2005) 73-105.

<sup>8</sup> J. Deleu, G. Durnez, R. De Schryver e.a. (eds.), *Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse beweging* (Tielt - Utrecht - Amsterdam, 1973-1975) 2 vol.; De Schryver e.a., *NEVB*.

<sup>9</sup> *Wetenschappelijke tijdingen op het gebied van de geschiedenis van de Vlaamse beweging*, 40- (1981- ). Below abbreviated to *Wt*. For a history of the periodical and a table of contents see the special issue *Bibliografisch nummer* of *Wt*, 60/4 (2001). See also <http://www.wt.be/index.php/wt/index> [accessed 16/4/2013].

<sup>10</sup> For example the special issue on *National movements and historiography* (*Wt*, 64 (2005)).

<sup>11</sup> See <http://kadoc.kuleuven.be>; <http://www.liberaalarchief.be>; <http://www.amsab.be> [all accessed 16/4/2013].

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.advn.be> [accessed 16/4/2013].

<sup>13</sup> E. Gubin, 'D'une histoire nationale à l'autre. A propos de l'historiographie du mouvement flamand en Belgique', in: H. Hasquin (ed.), *Histoire et historiens depuis 1830 en Belgique* (*Revue de l'université de Bruxelles*, 1-2) (Brussels, 1982) 126.

<sup>14</sup> H.J. Elias, *Geschiedenis van de Vlaamse gedachte* (Antwerp, 1963-1965) 4 vol.; H.J. Elias, *25 jaar Vlaamse beweging 1914-1939* (Antwerp, 1969) 4 vol.

<sup>15</sup> For a biography, see P.J. Verstraete, *Hendrik Jozef Elias. Biografie* (Kortrijk, 2005) 2 vol. For an analysis of his historiography: L. Wils, 'Elias of het gevecht met de geschiedenis', in: *Wt*, 51/4 (1991) 193-209.

<sup>16</sup> M. Lamberty, R. Van Roosbroeck, M. Vandekerckhove e.a. (eds.), *Twintig eeuwen Vlaanderen* (Hasselt, 1972-1979) 15 vol.

<sup>17</sup> E. Gubin, *Bruxelles au XIXe siècle. Berceau d'un flamingantisme démocratique (1840-1873)* (Brussels, 1979).

<sup>18</sup> J. Stengers, *Histoire du sentiment national en Belgique des origines à 1918*, 1: *Les racines de la Belgique. Jusqu'à la Révolution de 1830* (Brussels, 2000); J. Stengers & E. Gubin, *Histoire du sentiment national en Belgique des origines à 1918*, 2: *Le grand siècle de la nationalité belge. De 1830 à 1918* (Brussels, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> L. Wils, *Honderd jaar Vlaamse beweging. Geschiedenis van het Davidsfonds* (Leuven, 1977-1989) 3 vol.; L. Wils, *Van Clovis tot Happart. De lange weg van de naties in de Lage Landen* (Leuven - Apeldoorn, 1992) (translated into French: *Histoire des nations belges* (Ottignies, 1996); reviewed and extended *Van Clovis tot Di Rupo. De lange weg van de naties in de Lage Landen* (Leuven - Apeldoorn, 2005)). For an overview of his oeuvre, see L. Gevers & L. Vos, 'Lode Wils historicus en hoogleraar', in: L. Wils, *Vlaanderen, België, Groot-Nederland. Mythe en geschiedenis* (Leuven, 1994) which appeared on the occasion of his retirement as professor at the KU Leuven and in which *capita selecta* of his work were published. For *capita selecta* from his most recent work, see L. Wils, *Van de Belgische naar de Vlaamse natie. Een geschiedenis van de Vlaamse beweging* (Leuven, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> L. Wils, 'Naar de barst in België. Over "Le grand siècle de la nationalité belge" van Jean Stengers en Eliane Gubin', in: *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 11 (2003) 203-209.

<sup>21</sup> L. Vos, 'Die onbekende Vlaamse kwestie. Het aandeel van buitenlandse historici in de historiografie van de Vlaamse beweging', in: *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 100/4 (1985) 700-721. In the Netherlands it was Greater-Netherlands inspired historian Pieter Geyl who stimulated historiographical interest in the Flemish movement. The main author is Arie W. Willemsen who cooperated in the above-mentioned encyclopaedias of the Flemish movement and *Twintig eeuwen Vlaanderen*. His most important work

is *Het Vlaams nationalisme. De geschiedenis van de jaren 1914-1940* (Utrecht, 1969).

<sup>22</sup> K. Deprez & L. Vos (eds.), *Nationalism in Belgium. Shifting identities, 1780-1995* (London - New York, 1998). The book was translated and supplemented with some articles as L. Vos & K. Deprez (eds.), *Nationalisme in België. Identiteiten in beweging 1780-2000* (Antwerp, 1999). See also L. Vos, 'Shifting nationalism. Belgians, Flemings and Walloons', in: R. Porter & M. Teich (eds.), *The national question in Europe in historical context* (Cambridge, 1993) 128-147.

<sup>23</sup> An earlier publication was T. Hermans, L. Vos & L. Wils (eds.), *The Flemish movement. A documentary history, 1780-1990* (London, 1992). It concerns an anthology of historical documents with only 'A brief history of the Flemish movement' by Wils (1-39). An even earlier publication was M. De Vroede, *The Flemish movement in Belgium* (Antwerp, 1975). In contrast with what the title suggests, the book by American Belgium specialist C. Strikwerda, *A house divided. Catholics, socialists, and Flemish nationalists in nineteenth-century Belgium* (New York - Oxford, 1997) only very lightly touches upon the Flemish movement.

<sup>24</sup> E. Witte & H. Van Velthoven, *Languages in contact and in conflict. The Belgian case* (Kalmthout, 2011). It is a revised edition of E. Witte & H. Van Velthoven, *Language and politics. The situation in Belgium in an historical perspective* (Brussels, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> H. Van Goethem, *Belgium and the monarchy. From national independence to national disintegration* (Brussels, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> An early example is S. Tömmel, *Nation und Nationalliteratur. Eine soziologische Analyse des Verhältnisse von Literatur und Gesellschaft in Belgien zwischen 1830 und 1840* (Soziologische Schriften, 16) (Berlin, 1976); C. Hecking, *Flamen und Wallonen. Fremde Nachbarn im Hause Belgien? Die gegenseitige Perzeption im Spiegel der Tagespresse* (Berlin, 2001); G.H. Nörtemann, *Im Spiegelkabinett der Historie. Der Mythos der Schlacht von Kortrijk und die Erfindung Flanderns im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 2002). On national awareness in the Southern Netherlands before 1830: J. Koll, *Die belgische Nation. Patriotismus und Nationalbewußtseins in den Südlichen Niederlanden im späten 18. Jahrhundert* (Niederlande-Studien, 33) (Münster, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> B. Dietz, H. Gabel & U. Tiedau (eds.), *Griff nach dem Westen. Die 'Westforschung' der völkisch-nationalen Wissenschaft zum nordwesteuropäischen Raum (1919-*



1960) (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur Nordwesteuropas, 6) (Münster - New York - Munich - Berlin, 2003) 2 vol. German pre-war historiography on the Flemish movement was virtually completely dominated by political aims; see Vos, 'Die onbekende Vlaamse kwestie', 720.

<sup>28</sup> E. Witte, *Over bruggen en muren. Hedendaagse politieke geschiedenis en politieke wetenschappen in België (1945-2000)* (Leuven, 2003) 97.

<sup>29</sup> For example the special issue 'Nationalisme' of the *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 3 (1997); Deprez & Vos, *Nationalisme in Belgium*; L. Wils, 'Naties en nationale bewegingen. De aanbreng van internationaal historisch en sociologisch onderzoek', in: Wils, *Vlaanderen, Belgium, Groot-Nederland*, 431-449; H. Van Velthoven, 'De naties in Belgium anno 2000', in: De Schryver e.a., *NEVB*, 87-108.

<sup>30</sup> See the review by T. De Meester & M. Van Ginderachter of L. Vos & K. Deprez (eds.), *Nationalism in Belgium* and *Nationalisme in België* in *Wt*, 59/2 (2000) 114-121.

<sup>31</sup> E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1870. Programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge, 1990); E. Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Oxford, 1983); B. Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London, 1983); E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger (eds.), *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 1992).

<sup>32</sup> M. Reynebeau, *Het klauwen van de leeuw. De Vlaamse identiteit van de 12de tot de 21ste eeuw* (Leuven, 1995).

<sup>33</sup> L. Vos, 'Nationalisme. Reflecties van een historicus', in: *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 3 (1997) 320.

<sup>34</sup> A. Smith, *The ethnic origins of nations* (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>35</sup> Wils, *Van Clovis tot Di Rupo*.

<sup>36</sup> M. Hroch, *Die Vorkämpfer der nationale Bewegungen bei den kleinen Völkern Europas* (Prague, 1968); M. Hroch, 'Das Erwachen kleiner Nationen als Problem der komparativen sozialgeschichtlichen Forschung', in: T. Schieder (ed.), *Sozialstruktur und Organisation europäischer Nationalbewegungen* (Studien zur Geschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, 3) (Munich - Vienna, 1971) 121-139. These publications resulted in an authoritative book: M. Hroch, *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe. A comparative analysis of the social composition of*

*patriotic groups among the smaller European nations* (Cambridge - London - New York, 1985). For an update of his theory, see M. Hroch, 'Why did they win? Preconditions for successful national agitation', in: Br. De Wever, B. De Wever, V. Lambert e.a. (eds.), *National identities and national movements in European history* (Ghent, 2004) 645-655 (= *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, 34/4 (2004)).

<sup>37</sup> For the first time in L. Wils, 'Het ontstaan van de "kleine" Vlaamse natie', in: *Wt*, 50/4 (1991) 220-238.

<sup>38</sup> P. Pasture, 'Christelijke arbeidersbeweging en natie', in: *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 3 (1997) 215-235.

<sup>39</sup> D. Luyten, 'L'économie et le mouvement flamand', in: *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, no. 2,076 (2010); O. Boehme, 'Economic nationalism in Flanders before the Second World War', in: *Nations and nationalism*, 14/3 (2008) 542-561. Boehme wrote an exhaustive study on the socio-economic agenda of the Flemish movement in the interwar years: *Greep naar de markt. De sociaal-economische agenda van de Vlaamse beweging en haar ideologische versplintering tijdens het interbellum* (Leuven, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Nörtemann, *Im Spiegelkabinett der Historie*.

<sup>41</sup> G. Deneckere, *Sire, het volk mort. Sociaal protest in Belgium, 1831-1918* (Antwerp - Baarn - Ghent, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> M. Van Ginderachter, 'Het vaderland vanuit kikkerperspectief. Recent Belgisch en Nederlands onderzoek naar natievorming tijdens de lange negentiende eeuw', in: *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis*, 122 (2009) 522-537.

<sup>43</sup> M. Van Ginderachter, *Het rode vaderland. De vergeten geschiedenis van de communautaire spanningen in het Belgisch socialisme van WO1* (Tielt, 2005). For the period after World War I, see J. Erk, 'Sub-state nationalism and the left-right divide. Critical junctures in the formation of nationalist labour movements in Belgium', in: *Nations and nationalism*, 11/4 (2005) 551-570 and W. Vermeersch (ed.), *The Flemish left amidst a nationalist surge* (Ghent, 2011).

<sup>44</sup> Witte & Van Velthoven, *Languages*, 73-89.

<sup>45</sup> For an overview of recent skirmishes, see: J. Baerten, 'Kritische beschouwingen bij recente publicaties over de Vlaamse beweging en het nationalisme in België', in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 79/4 (2001) 1,255-1,274. Reactions on

this article: L. Vos, 'Vooringenomenheid?' and L. Wils, 'De stand van het onderzoek naar de Vlaamse beweging', in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 79/4 (2001) 1,275-1,282, 1,283-1,299 (see also Baerten's reply on 1,301-1,307).

<sup>46</sup> H. Van Velthoven & J. Tyssens, *Vlaamsch van taal, van kunst en zin. 150 jaar Willemsfonds (1851-2001)* (Ghent, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> Compare L. Wils, 'Beproefde samenwerking. Katholieken en vrijzinnigen in de Vlaamse beweging, 1860-1914', in: *Wt*, 58/3 (1999) 155-189; Witte & Van Velthoven, *Languages in contact*.

<sup>48</sup> For example H. Van Goethem, 'Taalpolitiek en staatshervorming', in: De Smet, *De historiografie*, 7-20.

<sup>49</sup> M. Van Ginderachter, 'Katholiek = Vlaamsgezind? De katholieken en de taalwet-Coremans van 17 augustus 1873', in: *Wt*, 58/2 (1999) 87-109 and the reply of H. Van Goethem in *Wt*, 58/3 (1999) 201-204.

<sup>50</sup> A brief introduction in English: B. De Wever, 'From language to nationality. The case of the Dutch-speaking Belgians in the nineteenth century', in: P. Broomans, G. Jensma, H. Vandevoorde & M. Van Ginderachter (eds.), *The beloved mothertongue. Ethnolinguistic nationalism in small nations. Inventories and reflections* (Groningen studies in cultural change, 33) (Leuven - Paris - Dudley, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> H. Van Velthoven, 'The making of Flemings (and Walloons)', in: E. Witte, G. Kurgan-Van Hentenryck & E. Lamberts (eds.), *Natie en democratie – Nation et démocratie 1890-1921* (Brussels, 2007) 269-278. The Walloon movement is beyond the scope of this contribution. For a reasoned overview of the historiography, see Ch. Kesteloot, 'L'historiographie du mouvement wallon', in: *National movements and historiography*, 37-56. For a concise history from the perspective of the study of nationalism see: M. Van Ginderachter & J. Leerssen, 'Denied ethnicism. On the Walloon movement in Belgium', in: *Nations and nationalism*, 18/2 (2012) 230-246.

<sup>52</sup> L. Wils, *Flamenpolitik en aktivisme* (Leuven, 1974). A recent study on the pan-German origins of the *Flamenpolitik*: B. Yammine, *Drang nach Westen. De fundamente van de Duitse Flamenpolitik* (Leuven, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> Willemsen, *Het Vlaams nationalisme*; Elias, *25 jaar Vlaamse beweging*.

<sup>54</sup> See for example L. Vandeweyer, 'Etnische zuivering als politiek project in België', in: *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 5 (1999) 43-71.

<sup>55</sup> D. Vanacker, *De Frontbeweging. De Vlaamse strijd aan de IJzer* (Koksijde, 2000).

<sup>56</sup> G. Deneckere, 'Lode Wils en Koning Albert I', in: *Wt*, 55/3 (1996) 181-195. Reply of Wils, 'De taalpolitiek van Koning Albert I', in: *Wt*, 55/3 (1996) 197-203.

<sup>57</sup> Van Goethem, *Belgium and the monarchy*, 255-256.

<sup>58</sup> L. Wils, 'Bormsverkiezing en Compromis des Belges. Het aandeel van regerings- en oppositiepartijen in de taalwetgeving tussen beide wereldoorlogen', in: *Revue belge d'histoire contemporaine*, 4/3-4 (1973) 265-330.

<sup>59</sup> G. Vanschoenbeek & H. Defoort, 'Socialistische partij', in: De Schryver e.a., *NEVB*, 2,777-2,789. G. Vanthemsche points at a 'pragmatic Belgian patriotism' of the Belgian Socialist Party between the world wars: 'Socialisten: gezellen zonder vaderland?', in: *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 3 (1997) 247-248.

<sup>60</sup> August Borms (1887-1946) was a leader of activism who was serving life imprisonment when in 1928 in a midterm election in Antwerp he was elected as candidate of the Frontpartij. It was a remarkable political fact that many contemporaries explained as an expression of the impatience of the Flemish at the absence of language laws.

<sup>61</sup> Wils, 'Bormsverkiezing'.

<sup>62</sup> The most important: L. Vos, 'Geyl en Vlaanderen. Een discussie. De eierdans van P. Geyl. Zijn Grootnederlandse politiek in de jaren twintig', in: *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 90/3 (1975) 444-457. L. Wils, 'Gerretson, Geyl en Vos. Spanningen tussen de Groot-Nederlandse beweging en de Vlaams-nationalistische', in: *Wt*, 41/2 (1982) 95-120; P. van Hees & A.W. Willemsen, 'Leuven's recidivisme. Het gebruik door prof. dr. L. Wils van de briefwisseling Geyl', in: *Wt*, 42/1 (1983) 44-58. An introduction written in English can be found in N. Van Sas, 'The Great Netherlands controversy. A clash of great historians', in: T. Frank & F. Hadler (eds.), *Disputed territories and shared pasts. Overlapping national histories in modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2011) 152-174.

<sup>63</sup> B. De Weaver, 'Groot-Nederland als utopie en mythe', in: *Cahiers d'histoire du temps présent*, 3 (1997) 163-180.

<sup>64</sup> L. Vos, 'De rechts radicale traditie in het Vlaams-nationalisme', in: *Wt*, 52/3 (1993) 129-149; B. De Wever, *Greep naar de macht. Vlaams-nationalisme en Nieuwe Orde. Het VNV, 1933-1945* (Tielt - Ghent, 1994). Also B. De Wever, 'Catholicism and fascism in Belgium', in: M. Feldman, M. Turda & T. Georgescu (eds.), *Clerical fascism in interwar Europe* (London, 2008) 131-156.

<sup>65</sup> L. Vos, 'The extreme-right in postwar Belgium. From nostalgia to building for the future', in: S.U. Larsen (ed.), *Modern Europe after fascism, 1945-1980's* (New York, 1998) 1,344-1,388.

<sup>66</sup> The Vlaams Blok developed in 1978. After a sentence for racism in 2004 the party was formally disbanded to be founded again immediately as Vlaams Belang. For a history of the Vlaams Blok, see M. Swyngedouw, 'The extreme right in Belgium. Of a non-existing Front National and an omnipresent Vlaams Blok', in: H. Betz & S. Immerfall (eds.), *New party politics of the right. Neo-populist parties and movements in established democracies* (Basingstoke, 1998) 59-75. For an analysis of the party in an international comparative study, see J. Jamin, 'Extreme-right discourse in Belgium. A comparative regional approach', in: A. Mammone, E. Godin & B. Jenkins (eds.), *Mapping the extreme right in contemporary Europe. From local to transnational* (New York, 2012) 62-77; H. De Witte & M. Spruyt, 'Belgique. Le Vlaams Blok. Un extrémisme dissimulé sous le populisme', in: P. Blaise & P. Moreau (eds.), *Extrême droite et national-populisme en Europe de l'Ouest. Analyse par pays et approches transversales* (Brussels, 2004).

<sup>67</sup> For a nuanced analysis, see J. Gotovitch & Ch. Kesteloot (eds.), *Occupation, répression. Un passé qui résiste* (Brussels, 2002).

<sup>68</sup> See <http://www.crisp.be> [accessed 16/4/2013]. For example S. Govaert, 'La Volksunie', in: *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, no. 1,416-1,417 (1993); S. Govaert, 'La Volksunie. Du déclin à la disparition (1993-2001)', in: *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, no. 1748 (2002); S. Govaert, *Les griffes du lion. Le nationalisme flamand à la veille de 2002* (Brussels, 2001). For a comparison of the nationalist ideology of VU with Vlaams Blok, see M. Breuning, 'Nationalism and nationalist parties. A comparison of the Vlaamse Volksunie and Vlaams Blok', in: *Nationalism and ethnic politics*, 3/1 (1997) 1-27.

<sup>69</sup> Some good introductions in English: K. Deschouwer, *The politics of Belgium. Governing a divided society* (London, 2009); M. Brans, L. De Winter & W. Swenden

(eds.), *The politics of Belgium. Institutions and policy under bipolar and centrifugal federalism* (London - New York, 2009).

<sup>70</sup> The acts were published as A. Lijphart (ed.), *Conflict and coexistence in Belgium. The dynamics of a culturally divided society* (Berkeley, 1981). For the older Anglo-Saxon literature, consult L. Huyse, 'Vijftien Angelsaksische auteurs over politiek, verzuiling en compromisvorming in België', in: *Res publica*, 17 (1975) 413-431.

<sup>71</sup> E.g. J. Erk, *Explaining federalism. State, society and congruence in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland* (Abingdon, 2008); P. Peeters, 'Multinational federations. Reflexions on the Belgian federal state', in: M. Burgess & J. Pinder (eds.), *Multinational federations* (London - New York, 2007) 31-49.

<sup>72</sup> See <http://www.rethinkingbelgium.eu> [accessed 16/4/2013].

<sup>73</sup> See <http://www.briobrussel.be> [accessed 16/4/2013]. BRIO was founded in 2005 as a consortium of research groups. For an overview of the research, see R. De Groof, R. Janssens, A. Mares e.a., 'Van BRUT naar BRIO. Dertig jaar onderzoek over Brussel', in: G. Vanthemsche, M. De Metsenaere & J.-C. Burgelman (eds.), *De Tuin van Heden. Dertig jaar wetenschappelijk onderzoek over de hedendaagse Belgische samenleving* (Brussels, 2007) 265-298.

<sup>74</sup> A. Detant (ed.), *Brussels-Jerusalem. Conflict management and conflict resolution in divided cities, a comparative research project* (Brussels, 1997). An earlier publication was E. Witte & H. Baetens Beardsmore (eds.), *The interdisciplinary study of urban bilingualism in Brussels* (Multilingual matters, 28) (Brussels, 1987).

<sup>75</sup> Cf. cycle of conferences on *Le fédéralisme comparé. Méthodologie, pratique et défis* (Brussels, 2002-2003); S. Jaumain & P.-A. Linteau (eds.), *Vivre en ville. Bruxelles et Montréal (XIXe-XXe siècles)* (Brussels, 2003). An earlier publication was S. Jaumain (ed.), *La réforme de l'état... et après? L'impact des débats constitutionnels en Belgique et au Canada* (Brussels, 1997). An earlier book on Belgium by the Canadian sociologist K.D. McRae was published in the series *Conflict and compromise in multilingual societies*, 2: *Belgium* (Waterloo, 1986).

<sup>76</sup> For a recent review, see B. De Wever & Ch. Kesteloot, 'When was the end of Belgium? Explanations of the past', in: *Journal of Belgian history*, 42/4 (2012) 218-228.

<sup>77</sup> At present there are no studies yet that put N-VA in a historical perspective. Most studies are politicological analyses, for example M. Swyngedouw & K. Abts,

'Les électeurs de la N-VA aux élections fédérales du 13 juin 2010', in: *Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP*, no. 2,125 (2011). The ideology of the party was studied in detail by I. Maly, *Analyse van een politieke ideologie* (Berchem, 2012).

<sup>78</sup> K. Windels, *De ware De Wever. Portret van de populairste politicus van het land* (Ghent, 2012) 109-113.